

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Draft Environmental Impact Statement: Bison Conservation and Management in Montana

What is the purpose of this Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)?

To determine if bison restoration is appropriate and if so, what potential opportunities are feasible and consistent within Montana's laws, policies, rules, and regulations.

How are bison currently classified in Montana?

Bison are designated as both a wildlife species in need of management and a species in need of disease control in Montana.

Don't the bison that migrate out of Yellowstone National Park count as wild bison?

Those bison are considered wildlife but they fall under management of the Interagency Bison Management Plan which is based in large part on minimizing disease transmission risk to domestic livestock; not restoring bison as a native species to Montana.

What is FWP's statutory requirement to manage bison?

FWP is required to manage wildlife, fish, game, and nongame animals in a manner that prevents the need for listing under the state or federal list of endangered species and in a manner that assists in the maintenance or recovery of the species

What alternatives are being analyzed in the draft EIS?

- Alternative #1: No Action
- Alternative #2: Restoration of a Publicly Managed Bison Herd on the Private and/or Public Lands of Willing Landowner(s)
- Alternative #3: Restoration of a Publicly Managed Bison Herd on Tribal Lands
- Alternative #4: Restoration of a Publicly Managed Bison Herd on a Large Landscape Where there are Minimal Conflicts with Livestock

How does FWP evaluate these alternatives when they are based on hypothetical scenarios?

At least one "case study" has been included for each of Alternatives #2-#4 to illustrate a real life scenario that fits the general criteria of the alternative. Potential impacts to the human and physical environment are evaluated for each alternative; however, the evaluation is indeed based on broad restoration scenarios.

What guidelines would FWP use to guide bison restoration within Alternatives #2 - #4?

FWP worked with a constituent group to identify general guidelines that fall into four categories: 1) project site guidelines; 2) bison source herd guidelines; 3) herd management guidelines; and 4) program implementation guidelines. These guidelines are described within Chapter 3 of the draft EIS.

Some particular guidelines that would apply to any restoration project: 1) only animals free of reportable diseases and free of cattle gene introgression would be used; 2) a pre-restoration range assessment would be conducted; 3) a well thought out containment and management plan would be completed; 4) full funding would be secured for at least a five-year test period; and 5) local community involvement would be required.

How much would a bison restoration project cost?

It is difficult to determine costs of a restoration project in detail when no specific location for restoration has been identified. A full cost assessment would be conducted within a follow up Environmental Assessment if it was determined to implement one of the alternatives calling for restoration and after a site was selected for implementation.

What is the next step if the 'no action' alternative is selected?

Selection of the 'no action' alternative does not prevent FWP from engaging in discussions on bison restoration. However, FWP would likely reduce resources invested in these discussions until new opportunities or funding resources are identified to move forward with restoration.

Will the final Record of Decision for this EIS select a site for bison restoration?

No, the decision will identify potential opportunities and guidelines for restoration if it is determined to move forward with some effort.

What is the next step if an alternative to restore bison is selected?

FWP could solicit project proposals that include site details and funding opportunities. A site-specific Environmental Assessment will need to be conducted for a specific site. A separate public scoping process will be conducted for this EA.